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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANNAN AVOIDS PARLIAMENTARY BOYCOTT

11. This message is sensitive but unclassified - protect accordingly.

12. (U) Summary. United Nations Secretary General (UNSYG) Kofi Annan canceled his scheduled visit to parliament on August 3, avoiding a boycott by what could have been a substantial number of parliamentarians. In the chamber of deputies, Petionville representative Steven Benoit led a group of roughly 12 deputies (out of a total of 88) in citing MINUSTAH's inaction against gangs as a reason for their intended boycott. In the upper chamber, Senate Vice President Edmonde Supplice Beauzile's anger over her detention by Argentinian troops during the recent parliamentary election in the Grand Saline district on July 30 galvanized other senators such as Youri Latortue to protest MINUSTAH's lack of respect for Haitian sovereignty. Subsequent to Annan's cancellation, the Senate unanimously resolved to boycott any other part of his program. While the Senate protest appeared parochial, Benoit's protest reflects unhappiness with MINUSTAH since the resurgence of kidnapping and related crime in July. Preval's explicit statement during the Annan visit that he preferred to "dialogue" with gangs rather than confront them appears to have deflected, for the moment, at least some of that criticism from MINUSTAH back to the Preval. Post reports on the Annan visit Septel. End Summary.

13. (U) After criticizing MINUSTAH performance and Annan's visit earlier in the week, on August 3 Benoit stated "I will leave the meeting (subsequently canceled) so that I will not have to hear Kofi Annan make vain promises while we are in a state of war. We cannot go to the airport without risk of being shot at. The United Nations in 50 years has never resolved any problem and has failed throughout the world. These men (the blue helmets) should leave," Benoit declared to journalists gathered outside of the Parliament. Benoit also advocated the restoration of the Haitian Armed Forces (FAd'H), dissolved by former President Aristide in 1994. Approximately 12 other deputies also announced their intention to boycott Annan's speech in order to show their disapproval of what they term, MINUSTAH's "laissez-faire strategy.8

14. (U) Senate President Joseph Lambert, on the other hand, on August 3 affirmed that he was ready to welcome the Secretary General before the National Assembly and joined the delegation that greeted Annan at the airport upon his

arrival. Lambert was restricted by a Senate resolution from participating in other activities with the UNSYG. The Senate resolution, barring Senators from participation in the Annan visit, was prompted by an incident in Grand Saline during the July 30 parliamentary re-run election (twice nullified because of election-day violence) in which Argentinean troops detained two senators. MINUSTAH reported that Senator Supplice Beauzile possessed an unregistered weapon at the time of the routine stop.

15. (SBU) Comment: The incident in Grand Saline is the latest in a string of incidents in which parliamentarians have been, in their view, unduly detained by MINUSTAH troops. MINUSTAH points out that most parliamentarians' cars are not specially marked, parliamentary ids are untrustworthy, and they do not have a clear understanding from the government of how they are to respect parliamentary immunity. In this light, Supplice's insistence that she be afforded special treatment in an area on high security alert after two failed elections seemed to many Haitian observers to be unwarranted. Benoit's statements, however, resonated with much of the Haitian public, who fairly or unfairly expect MINUSTAH to address the problem of gang violence. Preval's public statement that his government is consulting with the gangs puts the onus of responsibility for coping with the violence back on his government, for the moment. End Comment.  
SANDERSON